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Interventions to Promote Coping in Hospitalized Children: An Integrative Review of the Literature

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Interventions to Promote Coping in Hospitalized Children: An Integrative Review of the Literature

Allison S. duBois, BS, BA



Background

Hospitalized children face many stressors including physical injury, pain, loss of control, disruption of normal routines, and separation from parents and family. These stressors can significantly affect their psychological, social, and developmental well-being. Children may experience a number of short- or long-term negative reactions to hospitalization, including a decreased sense of control, sleep disturbances, anxiety, regression, and post-traumatic stress symptoms.

Purpose

The aim of this integrative literature review was to identify and examine interventions to promote coping in hospitalized children and to answer the following questions:

1. What interventions are available to promote coping in hospitalized children?
2. What evidence exists to support the effectiveness of these interventions in promoting coping in hospitalized children?



Methods

A search of the databases PubMed, CINAHL Complete, PsycInfo, and ProQuest Nursing & Allied Health Source was performed using keywords including *hospitalized child*, *hospitalized adolescent*, *coping*, *adaptation*, *adaptation- psychological*, *intervention*, *nursing intervention*, and *stress-therapy*. Only peer-reviewed articles, published within the past ten years in English, and with full-text available were included. Secondary sources were excluded.

Results

Play

- Five studies suggested that play can be an effective intervention to promote adaptation in hospitalized children.
- Play therapy was found to reduce stress levels, depressive symptoms, anxiety, and negative emotions.

Music

- Three studies indicated that music therapy can be a useful intervention for pediatric coping.
- Music therapy was found to decrease anxiety behaviors and increase coping behaviors.

Humor (Magic & Clowning)

- Two articles suggested that clowning and magic may be effective in promoting coping in hospitalized children.
- These articles indicated that clowning and magic may provide a useful distraction and may help children feel more comfortable and gain a sense of control.
- However, these articles lacked significant scientific analysis and one relied solely on anecdotal evidence.

Discussion

Findings of this review indicate that multiple interventions exist to promote coping in hospitalized children, however there is a lack of evidence of their effectiveness. This review found a limited number of studies in the recent literature. Studies that were uncovered lacked common measurement tools and one relied solely on anecdotal evidence. Additionally, no research articles addressing the efficacy of some commonly used interventions, such as animal therapy or art therapy, were discovered. Future research is needed to determine which interventions are effective at promoting adaptation and avoiding negative outcomes.



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